

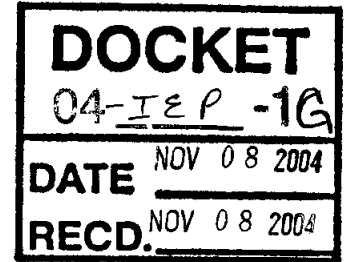


DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

1416 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
<http://www.dfg.ca.gov>
(916) 653-4875



November 8, 2004



John L. Geesman, Presiding Member
2005 Integrated Energy Policy Report Committee
California Energy Commission
Docket No. 04-IEP-01-November 15 workshop
Docket Unit, MS-4
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, California 95814-5504

Re: Department of Fish and Game Comments on Scoping and Data Collection
for the 2005 Integrated Energy Policy Report (2005 Energy Report)

Dear Commissioner Geesman:

The California Department of Fish and Game (Department) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the California Energy Commission (Commission) staff's proposed scope of work and data collection for the 2005 Energy Report. The Department appreciates the Commission's continued coordination with its sister State agencies on complex energy policy issues.

One of the Department's interests is to understand and minimize impacts to natural resources from the operation of hydroelectric facilities. The Commission's Environmental Report (July 2001) identified significant, ongoing adverse impacts to rivers, streams, fisheries and water quality from hydropower operations. The Commission's finding that impacts from hydropower operations have yet to be mitigated to the environmental standards required for other power generation facilities is important information for environmental scientists and policy makers.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) will be relicensing 47 projects from 1997-2016. California's hydropower system is the second largest in the country and these projects affect hundreds of waterways throughout the State. California has more licensed projects that are or will be undergoing relicensing in the next 10-15 years than any other state. FERC projects vary in scope and complexity. Some projects involve whole watersheds such as the American River, Mokelumne River, Feather River, San Joaquin River, and Pit River. Other projects, while smaller in scope, can still have significant effects on the aquatic resources.

Many licenses now expiring and coming up for relicensing were issued 50 years ago and generally do not require the Licensee to provide for the passage of anadromous fish and contain either no release requirement or a minimal release requirement for fish and other aquatic resources. Some licenses contain the same release requirement year round, regardless of water year type. This effectively "flat lines" a stream or river system. The science of riverine ecosystem processes relative to channel maintenance flows, ramping criteria, flushing flows, spawning flows, and other factors is still developing. The Department generally strives to have the new license replicate the natural hydrograph in the watershed in order to better assure that some form of the natural processes that existed before the hydroelectric project was built will be restored.

However, due to the piecemeal approach of addressing one individual FERC hydropower license at a time and the lack of monitoring requirements in most of the current licenses, we know very little about the broad environmental effects of hydropower on California's aquatic ecosystems. We have little scientifically based environmental baseline for the majority of California's hydropower system. Filling this data gap is vitally important to our understanding of aquatic resource impacts from current hydropower operations. This information will assist the Department and other California agencies and interested parties in better addressing and mitigating hydropower generation impacts on the aquatic ecosystems in the next license term.

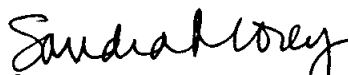
The Commission has in recent years been partnering with the Department, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and other agencies regarding the opportunity that the expiration of the current, outdated hydropower licenses brings to California. The Commission's staff participated in California's effort to provide input to FERC as it developed the Integrated Licensing Process as a way to better process the many relicensing applications it will receive in the coming years. The Commission's staff flew to Washington D.C. to participate in public workshops, providing valuable input into that process. The Commission staff has also been responsive to Department requests for clarification and assistance in understanding more about the generation and economic role that a particular hydropower project plays in this State.

The Commission is also now performing a study regarding pulsed flow releases on California stream systems through its Public Interest Energy Research Program (PIER). The Department eagerly awaits the results of the PIER study and anticipates that it will be helpful to the Department and other agencies in developing a recommended protocol for assessing possible ecological impacts of pulsed and manufactured flows on California stream habitats and biotic communities.

The Department encourages the Commission to aggressively pursue the topics identified in the staff's proposed workplan for the 2005 Energy Report. Further, the Department encourages the Commission to compile and analyze the data identified in that workplan regarding environmental impacts of hydropower operations in California so that the State agencies are better informed as we approach the long term relicensing of so many hydropower projects in this State.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your upcoming workshop. We look forward to sharing our views on the very important topic of hydropower in California. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (916) 653-4875 or Mr. Banky Curtis, the Department's Regional Manager for the Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region, a region that contains a large number of hydropower projects, at (916) 358-2915.

Sincerely,



Sandra Morey, Acting Deputy Director
Habitat Conservation Division

cc: Commissioner James Boyd
California Energy Commission

Department of Fish and Game

Mr. Banky Curtis, Regional Manager
Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region

Mr. Larry Week, Chief
Native Anadromous Fish and Watershed Branch